

AN  
ANSWER  
TO THE  
City-Conformists Letter,  
FROM THE  
Country Clergy-man,  
About Reading His Majesties  
DECLARATION.

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*With Allowance.*

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LONDON,

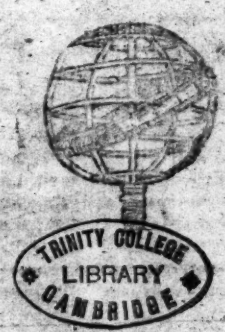
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A ANSWER

TO THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND'S

DECLARATION



*The Country Clergy Man's Answer to the City Conformists Letter, &c.*

SIR,

**Y**OU tell me you do not wonder at my Concern for publishing an Order of Council published in the *Gazette* for reading the King's Declaration for *Liberty of Conscience*. But I must assure you, that when I heard that the *London Clergy* refused to read it, I could not forbear Wondering.

That there was an Order given for the Reading it, did at first surprise me; for the Reasons of it did not immediately occur to my Thoughts: But that any of the Clergy, especially the Right Reverend Fathers the Bishops, decline the Publishing of it, surprises me more; and the Reasons they give, most of all.

There is (I confess) a great deal in what you have on the entrance of your Letter suggested. For to read the Declaration, is not to read the *Mass*, nor to profess the *Romish Faith*; and therefore no hurt in reading it; and to suffer for such a Refusal is not to fall like Confessors, but to suffer as Criminals, for disobeying the lawful Commands of our Prince. Thus much, you think, will be the sense of some: And there is so much cause to move the considering mind to conclude thus, that I think you right in your Notion of it: and do further believe, that not the Complying, but the Refusal to comply with this Order, on the Grounds you do, will provoke all Good Men to despise and hate us. For,

1. Hitherto the Government has been a Screen between our Clergy and the Censures of the People. There are Laws against Dissenters, we could say, and Laws must be observ'd: We had no hand in the making of those Laws, and could with 'em alter'd, but twas not in our power to do it. This has been the way we were forc'd to take, to the end we might be secur'd from the Peoples



ples Rage and Clamour; which by this means always past over us, and lighted on the Government. But now the Government being for a Remove of those Laws, the Clergies stickling so very much for their Continuance, exposes us; and we shall not be able to say, it is the Government; but 'twill be said, it is the Clergy that were for the Making, as well as Execution of Penal Laws. Besides,

2. You do hereby put us out of a Capacity of vindicating our selves from the Reproach of being *Persecutors*. Hitherto we have been able with some plausibleness to say, That none were punish'd for their Religion, or their Consciences; but for their Faction, their Sedition and Rebellion. Our Laws declar'd the matters Religious for which any fell under their Lash, to be a Crime against the Civil State. And 'twas for that, the *Papists* and *Phanaticks* suffer'd. His Majesties Grand-father, of Blessed Memory, insists on this; and so did Sir *Edw. Coke*. But now His Majesty distinguishing between matters of mere Religion, and those other Religious matters that are so blended with the Civil State, that the Error in Religion is a Crime against the Government, is resolv'd to do his part, towards the separating the one from the other, and to extend Liberty to all in matters of mere Religion, but no further. Our opposition therefore unto this, will insinuate into the minds of the People, that we do in good earnest desire, that Laws may be continued in force against men for matters of mere Religion: whereby we shall be inevitably involv'd in the odious Reproach of being Persecutors of Godly Conscientious Men.

But

3. The insisting on the *Illegality* of the Dispensing power, as a Reason of the Refusal, is one of the most impolitick things in the World. For

1. We have hereby lost that Interest we had, all along in the favour of the Prince. If we will be just in our acknowledgments, we must confess that we had been long ago a lost Church, had we not the Crown on our side to support us. It is the Monarch that has been the Bulwark of the Church of *England*, and we by asserting the Prerogative, which comprehends within it the Dispensing power, gain'd an Interest in him, who on all occasions hazarded himself for our Defence. The Bishop asserted the Prerogative,

gative, and the *Prerogative* preserv'd the *Bishop*. And the *Bishops* by opposing *Prerogative*, have broke down the Bulwark of our Church. And tho' with Grief, yet in Truth, we may say: Our Glory is gone, our Strength is departed. You have now made a Divorce between the *Crown* and the Church of *England-Mitre*; and must never more expect to be the Darling of a Crown'd-Head. No Prince can take pleasure in those that have contrary to their avow'd Principles, without any just provocation, as you have done, broke the *Crown* in pieces.

2dly. We have Condemn'd our selves, and justify'd the *Dissenters* in this. The Reason why we have for many years together Represented the *Dissenters*, even from the *Pulpit*, to be Men of Factious, Seditious and Rebellious Principles, was grounded on their Narrowing the *Prerogative*, and Limiting the *Monarchy*: which we said, they did, by refusing to Declare, that they would not value such Commissions as were granted by the Imperial Power, the *Prerogative*, more than the *King's* Authority, which is the Laws of the Land. We were sensible of the Mischief of the old *Puritanick Doctrine*, that made the Law to be the Mouth of the *King*, and held, that the *King* was Obey'd and Fought for, when 'twas against His Person, if 'twas in Defense of the *Politick Laws*: and we clearly saw, that there was no other way to obviate the Mischief of this their Seditious Doctrine; but by inventing and imposing the *Declaration of Abhorrence*, which all the Clergy Subscribe, and in which They Declare: *That those Commissions that are given out by the Imperial Power, contrary to the Law, must be much more deferred unto, than the Law of the Land; and that all those that hold the contrary, are for the Trayterous Position.*

But by this Opposition to His Majesty's *Declaration*, we regard not the *Imperial Law*; no, nor the Exercise of the *Royal Power*, tho' agreeable to our Laws: And contrary to our Solemn *Vows* and *Declarations*, have set up the *King's Authority* above His *Regal Power*; and as one of our Divines very lately, do make the Law, the Mouth of the *King*; and aver, *That our Obedience must not be to the Private, but Publick Declaration of His Will*; whereby we run so far, as to justify that Parliament, which Fought against His Majesty's Royal Father; whom notwithstanding His engaging.

ging to the loss of His Life, in our Quarrel, we now condemn; and Publish to the World; That the *Dissenters* were all along in the right. We cannot now say, that the *Dissenters* were *Fatious*, *Seditious*, and *Rebellious* heretofore, but by Condemning our selves for such at this time.

4<sup>ly</sup> In a word, you have by this Act, exposed our Ministry to the greatest Scorn and Contempt. For how can any wise Man reflect on what has been the burden of our Preaching, for many years together, in the Defence of the *Prerogative*, and see how we have at once given the Lye to all, and regard us any more? That we have, as the Embassadors of Christ, and in the Name of the Lord, Publish'd so very much in the Exalting the *Prerogative*, under the Notion of *Divine Truth*; and now pretend, that we are bound in Conscience, boldly to contradict all, is such a *Solifscim*, as will render it impossible for Men of Candor and Integrity to entertain any tollerable Thoughts of us or our Ministry. And those very Gentlemen which have wheeld'd you into this Snare, will neglect and scorn you.

The Reasons you give for your Refusal, make our Case the more deplorable. You in the first place, take it for granted, *That no Church-of-England-Man can approve of the Declaration*. And then add: *That Reading it, is an Overt-Act of Approbation. And to declare otherwise, is, Protestatio contra Factum. And the very Reading it will influence the Multitude, to do their utmost that Penal Laws and Tests be taken off, and do what will Reflect on those Noble Men and Gentry, that have lost their Places for being against it.* This is the Sum of what you say: To which I will distinctly Reply.

1<sup>st</sup>. To what you take *pro confesso*: None of our Clergy approve of the *Declaration*. I Answer, That many sober Men amongst us do approve both of the *Liberty of Conscience*, and of the *Dispensing-Power*. And there is not that Clergy-Man this day in England, who has not Exalted the *Regal Power* much higher than the Law of the Land, and are bound to regard the *King's Private Command*, as they do His *Private Commission*, more than His Authority; or, (which is the same) the Law of the Land. Thus much all our Clergy, before their Institution and Induction, have solemnly declar'd. And no other Reason can be assign'd for our dislike of the *Declaration*, but this; That we are against

*Liberty*



*Liberty of Conscience.* It is the *King's* Dispensing with those Laws that are made against *Dissenters*, that displeases you. And seeing, when a Law is made, it must be put in Execution, or there must be a Suspending the Execution by a Dispensing-Power, or a *Repeal*: Those who are against the *Repeal*, as you undoubtedly are, and also against the Dispensing with those Laws, must be for their Execution, *i. e.* for the filling of our Goals with *Dissenters*, Riffing their Houses, Ruining their Families, and destroying their Persons. This must be the thing aim'd at by those who cannot approve of the *King's Declaration* for Liberty: And seeing this is the thing you wou'd be at, how can you expect the *Dissenters* shou'd trust you? Or how can you, withour blushing say, you are for due tenderness to *Dissenters*, even when you will rather suffer your selves, than that the *Dissenters* enjoy the least ease?

2dly. To the Second, Reading is not an *Overt-Act* of Approving: Don't you remember, how many invidious Excommunications have been sent down unto us to Publish; which we have done, without making our selves a Party: Or can you forget the Distinction we have us'd to escape the Censure of the *Phanaticks*, about being Consenters to every thing that we Subscribe unto? We consent to the Use, but not the Sayings. And if Using the *Common-Prayer-Book*, which is done by Reading, be not Consenting; how comes it to pass, that Reading, in the present Case, must be Consenting. Furthermore,

3dly. To Read it, and at the same time to Dissent, is not *Protestatio contra Factum*. There is a difference between Reading, that is the *Factum*; and Consenting; and Protesting against Consenting, is not *Protestatio contra Factum*. To Read it, and Protest against Reading, is *Protestatio contra Factum*: But to Read, and Protest you do not Consent, is not such a Protestation. But,

4ly. Reading the *Declaration*, will influence the People from taking off the *Penal Laws* and *Tests*: And I am of your Opinion in this: for, let the Multitude but understand, that the *Test-Laws* shall continue until we have better security for our Religion, our Civil Rights and Properties, which is the thing His Majesty declares, and it's not to be doubted, but every Man of Sense will be for taking off the very *Tests*. But you mistake, when you add; *That the taking off the Test, is opening the door to let in Popery*

*Papery, to the Ruine of the Church of England.* For we need not fear *Papery*, unless the *Papists* have Power enough to drive us to their Religion by Persecution. And the taking off the *Tests*, on the Terms His Majesty Proposes, will give us greater security against Persecution, than now we have. A Legal Establishment which His Majesty offers our Church, will give us such a Security, as will please this whole Nation. At present our Security is erected on the Spoils of a great part of the Kingdom; who are hereby disquieted. For, our Safety lies in this, That no one, but a *Church-Man* be legally interested in the Favour of his Prince, or in the Advantages of the Government. All others must, for their Consciences be in constant Danger of inevitable Ruine. On which occasion, we have been look'd on as the Common Enemy to their Peace. But let our Security be such, as hurts not the Consciences nor Estates of others, which may be, by taking off *Penal Laws* and *Tests*, the Bond of Contention will be remov'd, and what is frightful in our Church, will disappear. We shall be look'd on as a Sister, and be Treated accordingly. And to the end that we may be Secur'd from any Dangers that may be supposed to arise from the *Roman Catholics*, we shall have a double Advantage. In the first place, we shall have a new Law, confirming us in the free Exercise of our Religion, and full Enjoyment of our Possessions. And in the next place, By putting it out of the Power of any one Party to Persecute the other, we shall be out of the Power of *Papist* Persecutions. And to prevent any change on this Law, we shall have the help of all the *Dissenting-Protestants* to joyn with us, who will be affraid any Alteration should be made on it, lest thereby they also lose their Security. Which Security, once obtain'd, will be most grateful unto the Nobility and Gentry you mention.

Thus Sir, I have freely open'd my self unto you; Praying Almighty God to give our Right Reverend Fathers more Wisdom, that They may not be impos'd on by those who love 'em not, but may suddainly be brought to that Temper, which is necessary towards the Healing our Breaches, and the Establishing the Peace of our Israel.

F I N I S.





